

Town Administrator's Report 7/07/2011

1. **All America City-** I wanted to take a brief moment to thank our team and our sponsors for participating in last month's All America City Competition in Kansas City, Missouri. While Dedham did not bring home one of the awards, it is my belief that we won in so many other ways. Our team presentation was exceptionally well performed; probably the best performance that we had given during all of our practice sessions. Our team performance off the stage was just as commendable with everyone getting to know and learning from many of the other finalist communities from across the country. All in all it was a great experience that everyone in Dedham should be proud of. I am quite certain that we will be back in the competition in the very near future; if not next year but perhaps the year after. Since we have returned home, we have continued to receive compliments from everyone who saw our presentation on line and we have received praise from some of the other finalist communities who felt that Dedham a terrific job. "Our mission continues" is the theme that we now have and I remain confident that Dedham has an All America City Award in its very bright future. Next Tuesday Night we will be honoring our sponsors and supporters with a reception at the Endicott Estate beginning at 6:00 P.M. We hope to have many of our Team Members at that event and to have representatives from many of our sponsors and friends who so graciously donated their time and resources in supporting our All American City Mission. It should be a great night and another important memory for Dedham's 375th Birthday Year.
2. **Endicott Estate-** During the past few weeks there have been some comments and some concerns raised regarding activities and maintenance at the Endicott Estate. I would like to address some of the comments at this time. First, some of the comments have been critical of the of the vote taken by the Endicott Estate Commission to remove much of the old split rail fence that has surrounded the grounds at the Estate. The decision to remove the fence was one that I supported from several perspectives. First the fence had been damaged in several locations due to the severe winter that we experienced this past year. The fence was old and did not add to the outside appearance of the Estate. While a few residents complained about the removal of the fence, there have been many who have complimented this decision by indicating that the Estate now appears more open to anyone who drives or walks by the grounds. In the view of the Commission and to many residents, the split rail fence was not consistent with the overall grand appearance of the Estate. Other concerns have been expressed that the grass has not been cut as often as it should be. Perhaps that may have been true but steps have been taken to address this concern so that it will be rectified going forward. We have added some temporary summer help to the Estate's maintenance staff; which is just one full-time employee. That one person is responsible for the upkeep and care of the inside and outside appearance of the Estate.

At one time we had one additional half-time position who assisted with the maintenance work but that person has since left the Town and we have not refilled this vacancy due to budget constraints. The addition of the summer support staff is cost effective and will help to keep the grounds maintained to a much higher standard. Finally, everyone is aware of the fact that I have made the management of the Estate a priority issue for evaluation this year. That evaluation process has begun and I am soliciting input and ideas on how to best address this question with the aim of making some recommendations to the Fall Special Town Meeting.

3. **New Fiscal Year-** July 1 marks the beginning of a new fiscal year. I am pleased to report that Dedham completed Fiscal Year 2011 in sound fiscal condition and that we started Fiscal 2012 in a similar manner. We have been awaiting final budget action from the State and we have learned that our budget estimates from the State were properly conservative and will yield some minor spending flexibility going forward. One important element of the Commonwealth's spending plan for Fiscal 2012 includes Health Care reform. We are evaluating what final plan language was included and how this will affect our plans with the West Suburban Health Plan going forward. There were several different approaches that were presented by the Governor, the House, the Senate, and the Conference Committee that eventually resulted in some important adjustments to how health care can be offered to municipal employees throughout the Commonwealth. The West Suburban Health Plan's Board of Directors will not be meeting until September. By then, I should have a better understanding of what the new rules and regulations will mean for Dedham.
4. **Emergency Management Planning-** During the past year, communities throughout the Commonwealth have experienced some significant weather related or natural phenomena that have required emergency management response of some unprecedented levels. Our winter storms of the past year or the tornadoes that impacted much of Western Massachusetts required a coordinated community response from many Massachusetts communities to respond to those disaster events. This has highlighted Dedham's needs to update our disaster response plans and to structure a new program. I have planned a series of meetings over the next several months with staff and State resources to evaluate our plans and to further define our responses. The first of these meetings will be held next week to evaluate all existing plans, identify outside resources and to establish an emergency response structure. These meetings will continue every other week for the next few months with the idea of holding a table-top exercise in September or October of this year. These are plans that we hope we will never have to use but plans that we will have put in place and practiced in the event that we do need to put them into action.

5. **Priority Issues-** Over the next few months, most Dedham residents will be enjoying their summers and taking some time off for vacations. While some of us plan to do the same, there are a number of priority projects that we will be focused on right into September. Several of the priority issues include the evaluation of the Endicott Estate, the development of the Emergency Management Plans, the on-going Public Safety Study, the filling of several key staff positions, and the evaluation of the possible DPW and Parks staffing merger. This coupled with the new and renewed Goals identified by the Board this evening will make for a very busy summer.

To all of Dedham's residents I hope that the next few months are enjoyable but safe for whatever plans that you may have made during this time.